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Book Review: Afterlife Knowledge Guidebook: A Manual for the Art of Retrieval and Afterlife Exploration

(From the Exploring the Afterlife Series)

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It took Bruce Moen over three years to prove to himself that the afterlife is real. Being an engineer who values efficiency and simplicity, he wrote *Afterlife Knowledge Guidebook: A Manual for the Art of Retrieval and Afterlife Exploration* to help others prove its existence to themselves more swiftly. As he puts it, "My intent in writing this book is to help guide you to prove to yourself beyond all doubt that our afterlife exists, and to demonstrate the benefits that flow from that knowledge" (259). Like the workshops from which it evolved, the *Guidebook* proceeds step by step. Its major sections—concepts of consciousness, tools of conscious exploration, afterlife exploration techniques, and retrieval-based exploration—take the reader from simple exercises for relaxation and building energy to advanced retrievals, with a myriad of approaches in between. Precise scripts for the exercises are included for those who want to make their own recordings, but one might better order Moen's six-CD set on his website (www.afterlife-knowledge.com). All twenty-six exercises are also available on a single MP3 CD.

The theory of consciousness developed in the first section features two key concepts. First, Charles T. Tart's "State-Specific Memory" holds that "the memory of an event is stored within the area of consciousness in which that event occurred" (7). Second, the "Hemi-Sync® Model of Consciousness" enables access to unconscious material and nonphysical realms through focused attention. As Moen explains the model, "Once you can identify the feeling of any area within consciousness, merely remembering and reexperiencing that feeling will automatically shift your awareness back to that area of consciousness" (6). Ironically, for all his "logical, rational, engineer's perspective" (34), he bases his system on *feeling*.

The trouble is that beliefs keep one from having conscious recall and must be adjusted slowly, lest one experience a Belief System Crash. Progress is possible through addressing Aspects of Self through inner dialogue and achieving a balance between what Moen calls the Perceiver (the unconscious information gatherer) and the Interpreter (which works by association to bring the nearest similar thing to awareness). A mixture of metaphors may clarify the point. Moen believes that when we click out, the Interpreter's circuit breaker flips; but we are still perceiving information that can be remembered later in "time-release-memory pills" (293). As a result (and this is my own addition), the frontier of an individual person's consciousness is pushed back.

How, then, does Moen's technique work? As it turns out, feeling is not the only non-engineer-like thinking required. Like the priming water in an old-fashioned hand pump, pretending and fantasizing start the process; eventually, fantasy yields to the imagination, which can grasp things that are real and unexpected. After the focus of attention shifts to nonphysical reality, nonphysical Helpers can be of service. Once one begins to contact persons who are stuck, the most important thing is the ability to project love. Moen considers "Feeling and Building Love Energy" to be the most important exercise in the book because a blast of Pure Unconditional Love (PUL) often alters a stuck soul's awareness enough for a Helper to get its attention. After an encounter with the dead, one needs to try to verify information about them or compare notes after a partnered exploration. Either or both methods should lead directly to confirmation that the afterlife is real.

Although Moen's system is thus simple to describe, anyone who wants to follow it will need to spend months or years practicing the exercises and to avoid, if possible, the mistakes he made as he was learning. These include thinking that nonphysical perception is just like physical perception, mistaking the quality of images for their reality/accuracy, discarding information gathered by imagination, and thinking that he had to go out of body to do soul retrieval. As far as Moen is concerned, OBE is unnecessary because soul retrieval is possible without going as deep as one does in an OBE. Since everything is consciousness, we are already everywhere anyway; therefore, shifting focus is the key to successful retrievals.

The method that *Afterlife Knowledge Guidebook* lays out is indebted to a number of sources and traditions. Of course, Moen reproduces the Monroe cosmology of Focus levels 22-27, but much of the borrowing from The Monroe Institute® is unacknowledged: his energy exercise involves forming a resonant energy balloon; he uses Monroe's phrase "preparatory process" but alters its steps significantly; one wonders if what Moen calls 3-D Blackness is something akin to Focus 15 (see 183ff. and 185); and PUL obviously recalls Focus 18. In addition, the role of imagination in his system resembles Carl Jung's technique of active imagination, which enables dialogue with characters in dreams and other inner figures (in other words, Aspects of Self). Regarding active imagination, a homology may be helpful: Monroe is to the binaural beat as Moen is to active imagination. Just as Monroe used the binaural beat to develop Hemi-Sync, Moen applies active imagination to afterlife exploration in a way that Jung never considered.

Moen also seems to have borrowed various things from remote viewing. All of the following sound similar to that technique. Moen writes, "Contact often begins with a fleeting image, a feeling, a thought, etc." (213). He urges practitioners of his system to perceive and record raw data but not to interpret it. When the Interpreter strays too far from these data, the result is Interpreter Overlay, similar to what remote viewers call Analytic Overlay. When this happens, Moen's advice is to back away from the false interpretation, much as remote viewers draw a line in their notes, write "AOL," and redirect their attention to the data stream. As well, accounts of soul retrievals at Moen's workshops and remote viewings both receive objective evaluation. Each

participant submits the name of a dead loved one and can later confirm that someone else's notes match the name, again confirming that the afterlife exists (260).

Along with noticing some of these unacknowledged debts, readers may have some unanswered questions about Moen's theory of consciousness. First, some connection to Reiki and other types of energy work would have helped. For example, since a Reiki practitioner's tingling hands are a sign of energy flow, what is the relationship between Reiki and the book's energy-building exercises? The question is very relevant because energy workers in various traditions have the sensitivity to use Moen's methods with great success. Second, this statement—"beliefs are the very bricks and mortar of your identity" (67)—seems insufficient. Surely identity is greater than what we believe, even if some beliefs are unconscious. In particular, how do psyche and soul relate to a human being's identity? Two final points need clarification. What is the relationship between guides that are Aspects of the Self and what Moen's calls the "disk" (soul group)? Also, in terms of access to nonphysical information, what is the connection between the heart, the left brain, and the unconscious? Apart from these substantive matters, the physical book itself is marred by some minor lower-order errors and by a cover so poorly attached that it separates from the spine before one is halfway through.

Oddly, the most interesting thing in the book has nothing to do with the afterlife or soul retrieval but rather with what Moen calls "Pure Doubtless Intent," a state of consciousness in which it is possible to walk on water, fly through the air, and levitate by merely expressing the desire. Of course, if Moen had written more about it, the book would have veered off topic; but it is fascinating to wonder how someone might apply the Hemi-Sync Model and State-Specific Memory to this area of consciousness. As for his next project, Moen states that he plans "to include the partnered exploration workshop material . . . as a separate book in the Exploring the Afterlife Series" (308). If it is as helpful as the *Afterlife Knowledge Guidebook*, it will be a significant contribution to the literature of consciousness exploration. Quibbles aside, the book provides important tools for the exploration of consciousness and may enable solutions for anyone who has had a "non-experience experience" at The Monroe Institute.

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